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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY Cuba

SUBJECT Fuerza Aerea Revolucionaria (FAR): Maj Del Valle, Chief; Díaz Lanz Men Retain Key Positions; Flying Personnel; Combat Aircraft

DATE OF INFO. Jan-Aug 60

PLACE & DATE ACQ. Throughout Cuba/Jan-Aug 60

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REFERENCES CD/OO Case 33369 (USAF)

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE: US national; former US Marine Corps non-commissioned officer.

Source is a 23-year-old ex-Marine who spent the period from February 1959 through July 1960 serving in the Cuban Army and the Cuban Air Force. He obtained his discharge from the Cuban Air Force in June 1960 and returned to the US via Mexico City on 30 Aug 60. According to source, he had been nominated by the US Marine Corps to enroll in the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps at a US university, even though he had not finished his high-school education. He reportedly did not accept this offer because he was much more interested in Special Forces type activity, and this led to his decision to leave the Marine Corps and a short time later to enlist in the Cuban Army. He appears to be a keen observer. While source's plans are indefinite, he should be available for further interview during the next few weeks (mid-October - November 1960).

1. The Cuban Air Force [Fuerza Aerea Revolucionaria (FAR)] was in a state of turmoil during my tour of duty, from December 1959 to mid-June 1960. Although I was stationed at San Julian Air Force Base (this field was not an operational Air Force Base, but it served as the training base for the militia of Pinar del Río Province and also handled the patrol flights over the western half of the province), I flew throughout Cuba and was able to obtain a fairly accurate picture of Air Force happenings. My prior duty in the Paratroop Regiment of the Cuban Army also threw me in contact with a number of Air Force personnel. In addition, I maintained close contact with some of the Nicaraguan pilots in the Air Force.

2. The commander of the Cuban Air Force during the time I served with the organization was Maj Sergio Del Valle, an MD with no military aviation experience. He was reported to be a good organizer and administrator, and it also was alleged that he had Premier Castro's confidence. He knew nothing, however, about running an Air Force. His predecessor, Maj Juan Almeida, left the Air Force to become Chief of the Cuban Army. The Air Force chief prior to Almeida, of course, was Maj Pedro Díaz Lanz, who defected to the US. The significant point of this is that most of the key people in the Air Force are Díaz Lanz men, and since the defection of their chief they have rather effectively sabotaged the effective operation of the Air Force. This has been done through a slow down in the purchase of spare parts, snarl-ups in logistic support to aircraft, and improper assignment of personnel.

3. The Air Force had a total of 31 qualified pilots when I was discharged in June 1960. I heard that 23 of these were locked up on or about 10 Jul 60 when an abortive plot to bomb Havana and other areas of Cuba including

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28 DEC 1960

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